MARVEL KNIGHTS®

MARVEL PSR 7

SPIDER-MAN®

VENOMOUS

PART 3

PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"VENOMOUS"

Aunt May being kidnapped by an unknown enemy had pushed Peter Parker closer to the edge than ever before. The psychic prediction from the X-Men's Marvel Girl that May had been murdered has pushed him right over. Forces are moving against him from a number of directions: Money troubles, a five million dollar reward for his secret identity, and the news that his villains are being secretly experimented upon. However, the disappearance of May Parker is what is tearing him apart and, all the while, Venom is lurking in the wings.

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VENOMOUS

PART THREE OF FOUR

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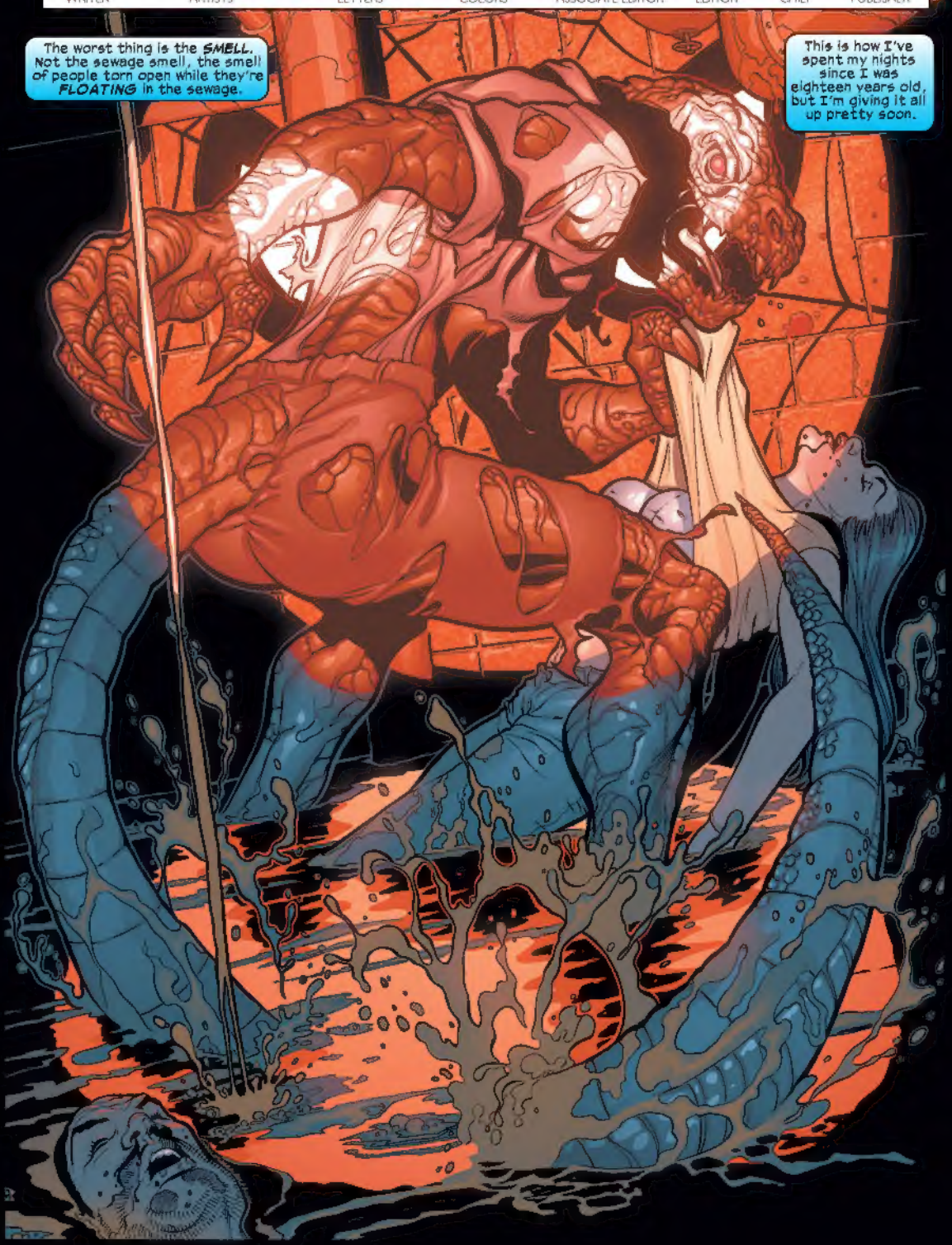
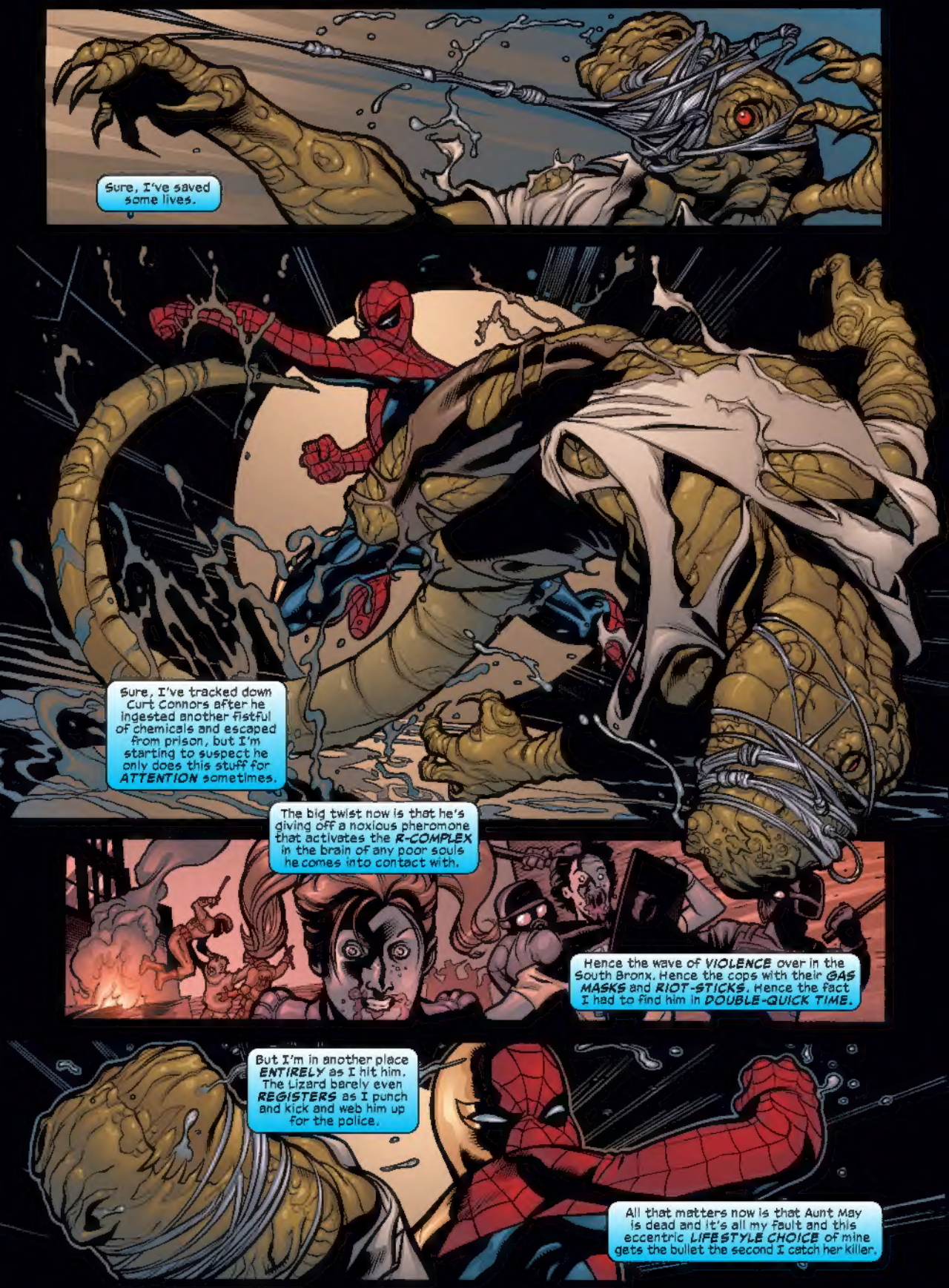
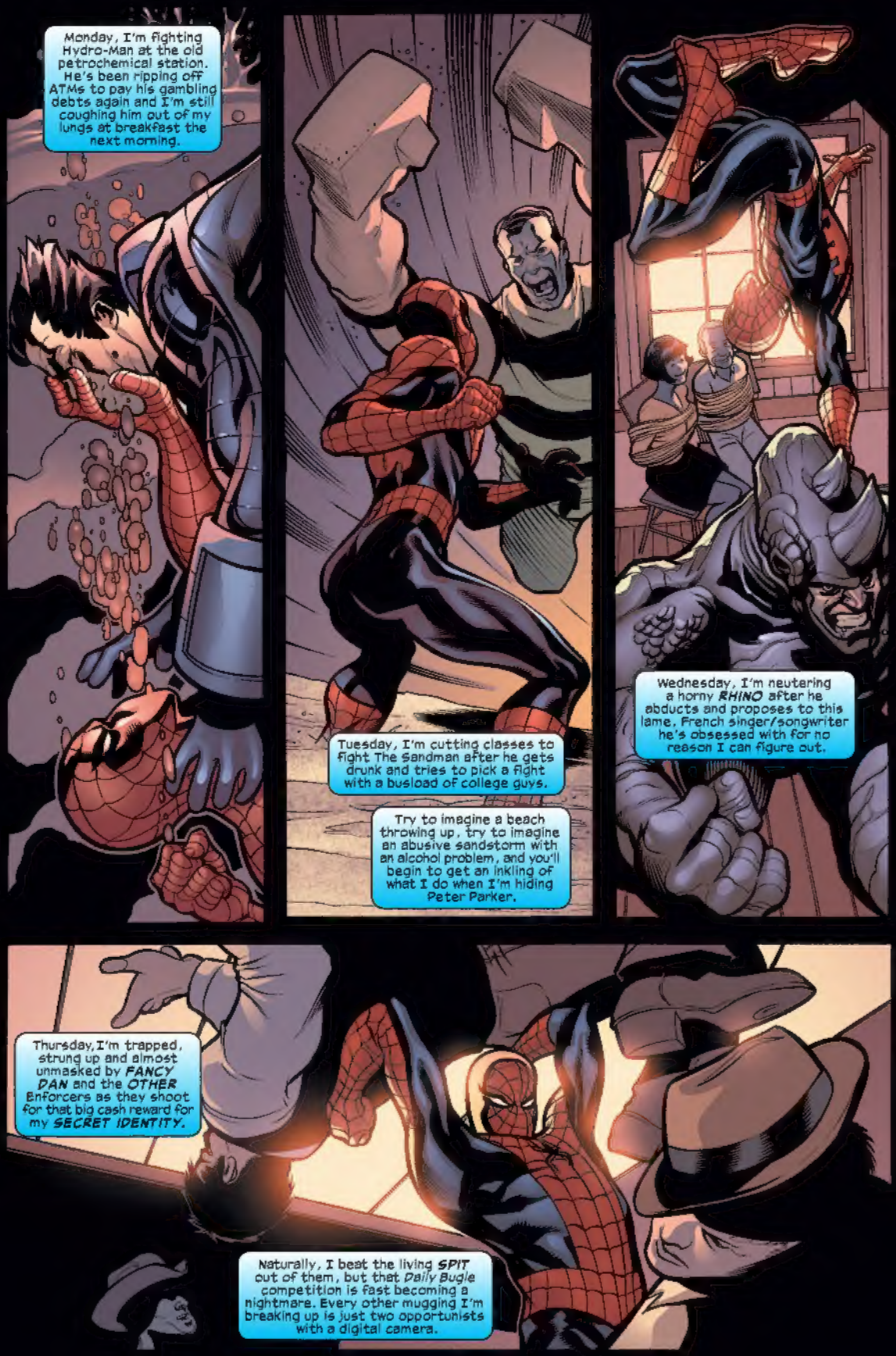
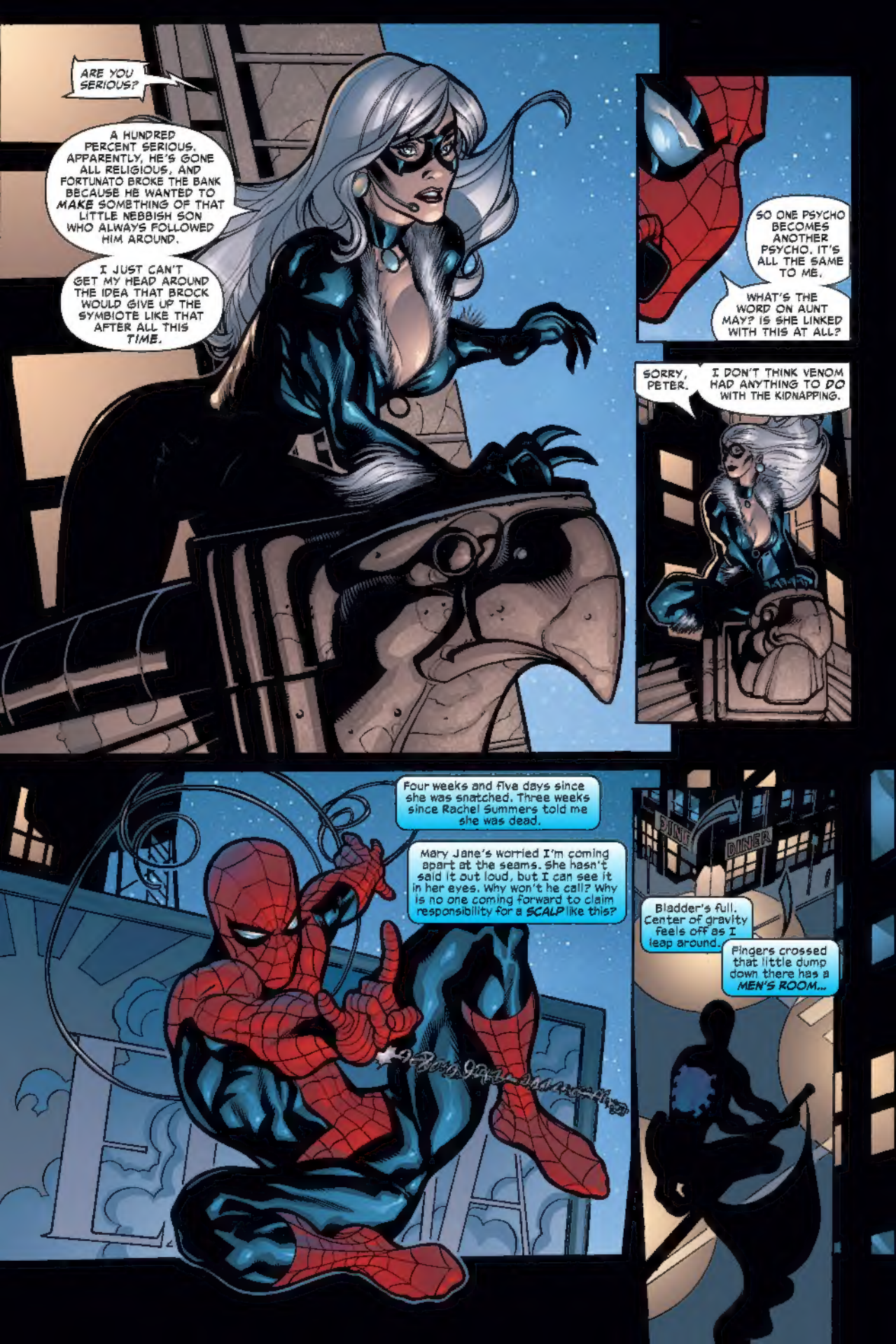

The worst thing is the SMELL. Not the sewage smell, the smell of people torn open while they're FLOATING in the sewage.
This is how I've spent my nights since I was eighteen years old, but I'm giving it all up pretty soon.

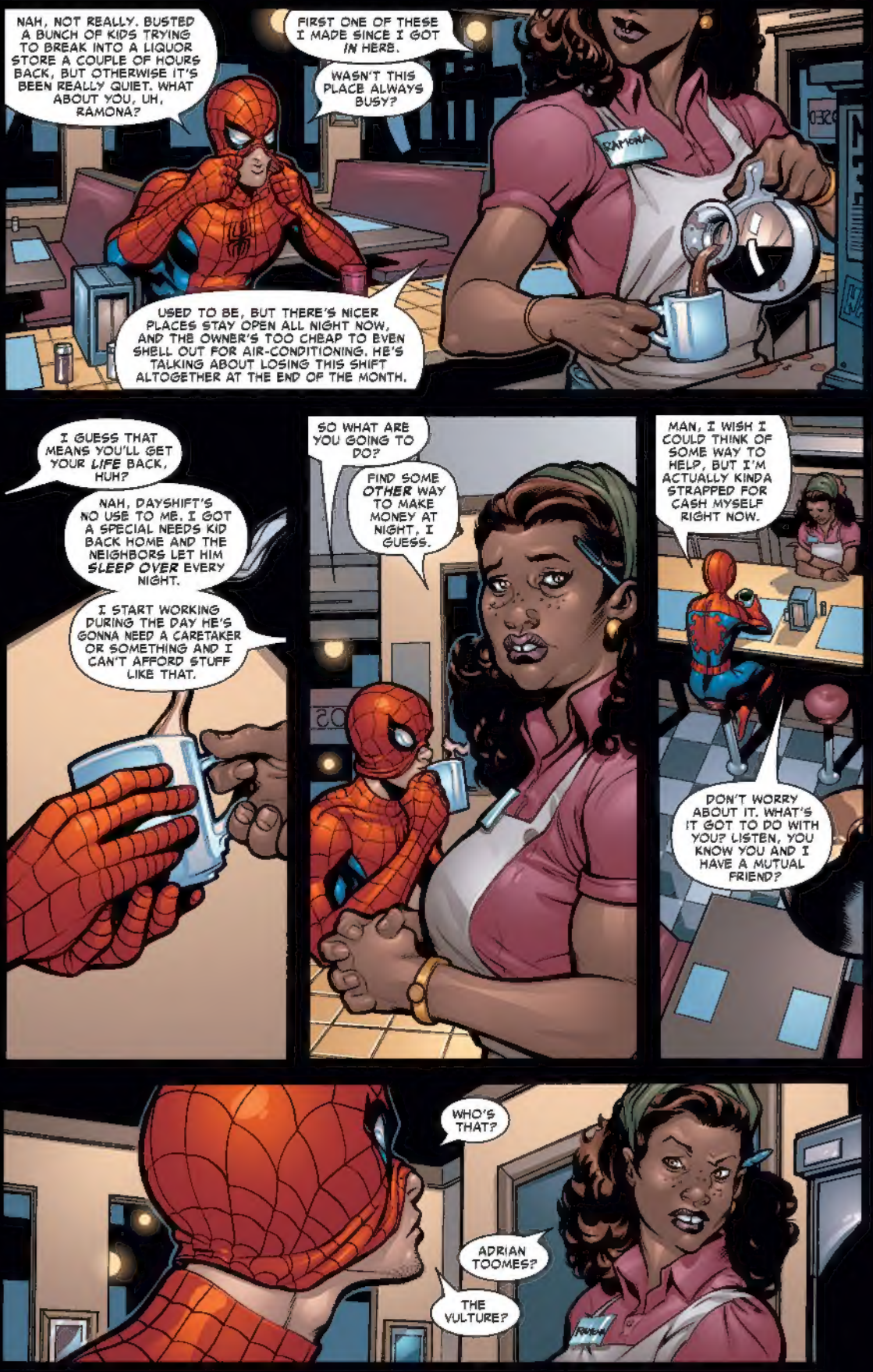

Sure, I've saved some lives.
Sure, I've tracked down Curt Connors after he ingested another fistful of chemicals and escaped from prison, but I'm starting to suspect he only does this stuff for ATTENTION sometimes.
The big twist now is that he's giving off a noxious pheromone that activates the R-COMPLEX in the brain of any poor souls he comes into contact with.
Hence the wave of VIOLENCE over in the South Bronx. Hence the cops with their GAS MASKS and RIOT-STICKS. Hence the fact I had to find him in DOUBLE-QUICK TIME.
But I'm in another place ENTIRELY as I hit him. The Lizard barely even REGISTERS as I punch and kick and web him up for the police.
All that matters now is that Aunt May is dead and it's all my fault and this eccentric LIFESTYLE CHOICE of mine gets the bullet the second I catch her killer.


Monday, I'm fighting Hydro-Man at the old petrochemical station. He's been ripping off ATMs to pay his gambling debts again and I'm still coughing him out of my lungs at breakfast the next morning.
Tuesday, I'm cutting classes to fight The Sandman after he gets drunk and tries to pick a fight with a busload of college guys.
Try to imagine a beach throwing up, try to imagine an abusive sandstorm with an alcohol problem, and you'll begin to get an inkling of what I do when I'm hiding Peter Parker.
Wednesday, I'm neutering a horny RHINO after he abducts and proposes to this lame, French singer/songwriter he's obsessed with for no reason I can figure out.
Thursday, I'm trapped, strung up and almost unmasked by FANCY DAN and the OTHER Enforcers as they shoot for that big cash reward for my SECRET IDENTITY.
Naturally, I beat the living SPIT out of them, but that Daily Bugle competition is fast becoming a nightmare. Every other mugging I'm breaking up is just two opportunists with a digital camera.

Friday, I stop three house break-ins, an assault, some kids lighting a fire and end the night chasing two stoners from the Smithsonian driving a perfect replica of something I tried very hard to FORGET...
The next two weeks nothing happens WHATSOEVER, but I can't get that image of OTTO OCTAVIUS out of my mind.
He looked so PATHETIC lying there, drugged up and helpless. Who was BEHIND that? What the Hell was GOING ON back there and why is my spider-sense telling me it's bad news?
ANY WORD, FELICIA?
INTERESTING TIDBIT ON DON FORTUNATO. YOU REMEMBER JIMMY SIX'S DAD? WELL, TURNS OUT HE WON THAT AUCTION A FEW WEEKS BACK AND HE'S SCRAPING TOGETHER EVERY CENT HE CAN FIND TO PAY THE DEBT.
ANY WORD ON THE MERCHANDISE?
THE OWL'S SAYING NOTHING. HE KNOWS THIS IS ALL BEING FED BACK TO YOU, BUT I GOT THE SHOCKER DRUNK AND HE TOLD ME EDDIE BROCK JUST AUCTIONED VENOM OFF TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER.

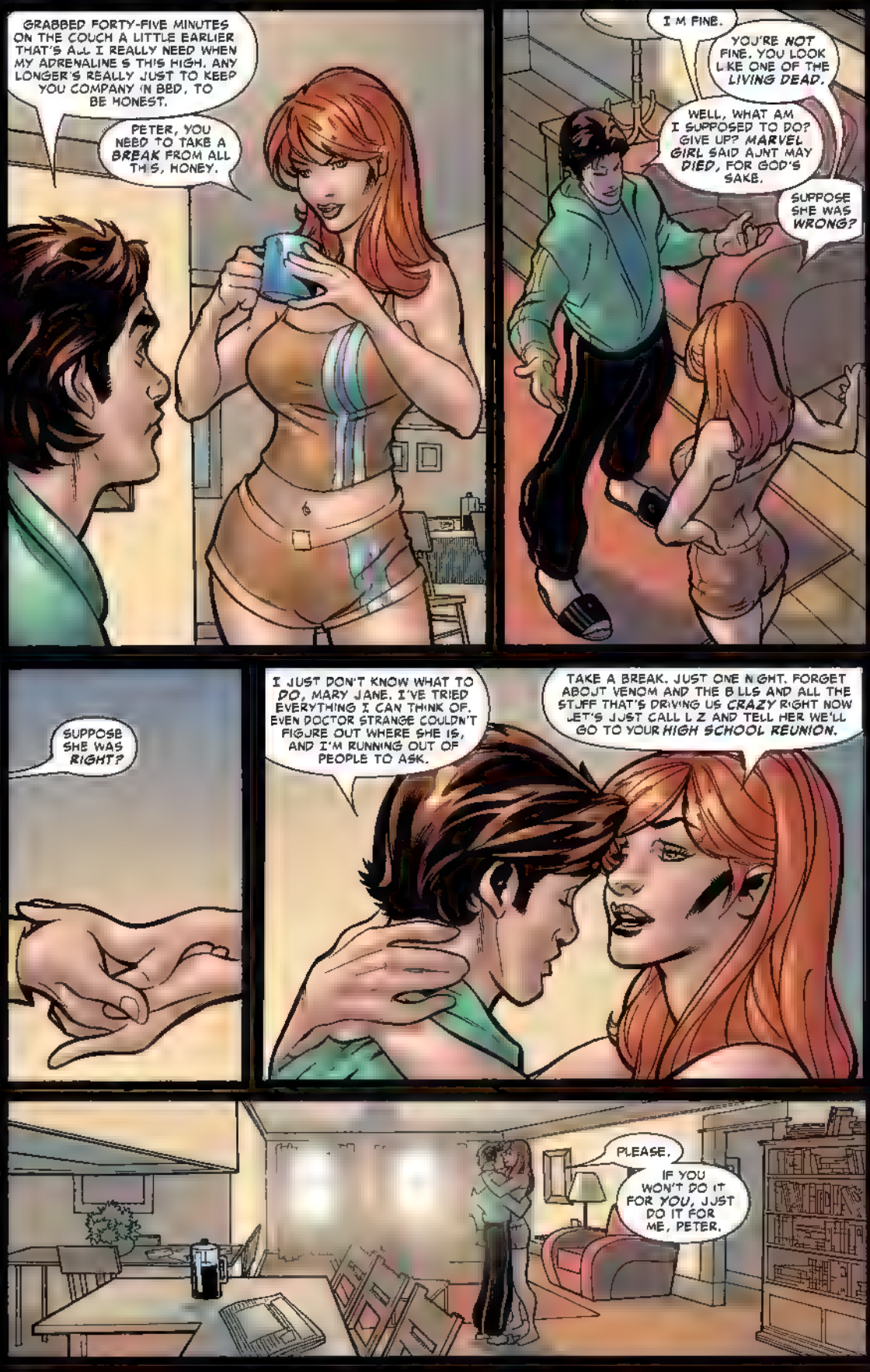

ARE YOU SERIOUS?
A HUNDRED PERCENT SERIOUS. APPARENTLY, HE'S GONE ALL RELIGIOUS, AND FORTUNATO BROKE THE BANK BECAUSE HE WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING OF THAT LITTLE NEBBISH SON WHO ALWAYS FOLLOWED HIM AROUND.
I JUST CAN'T GET MY HEAD AROUND THE IDEA THAT BROCK WOULD GIVE UP THE SYMBIOTE LIKE THAT AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
SO ONE PSYCHO BECOMES ANOTHER PSYCHO. IT'S ALL THE SAME TO ME.
WHAT'S THE WORD ON AUNT MAY? IS SHE LINKED WITH THIS AT ALL?
SORRY, PETER.
I DON'T THINK VENOM HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE KIDNAPPING.
Four weeks and five days since she was snatched. Three weeks since Rachel Summers told me she was dead.
Mary Jane's worried I'm coming apart at the seams. She hasn't said it out loud, but I can see it in her eyes. Why won't he call? Why is no one coming forward to claim responsibility for a SCALP like this?
DINER
Bladder's full. Center of gravity feels off as I leap around.
Fingers crossed that little dump down there has a MEN'S ROOM...

MILLAR
OPEN
HEY!
RESTROOMS FOR PAYING CUSTOMERS ONLY
YOU READ?
UH, SORRY, BUT I JUST REALLY, REALLY HAD TO GO BACK THERE, LADY.
YEAH, WELL, SORRY, BUT NOW YOU REALLY, REALLY GOT TO BUY SOMETHING, MAN.
YOU SERIOUS?
I LOOK LIKE I GOT A SENSE OF HUMOR?
WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE, SPIDER-MAN? TONIGHT'S SPECIAL IS KEY LIME PIE AND COFFEE FOR $2.99.
UH, JUST A COFFEE ON ITS OWN, THANKS. BLACK AND LOTSA SUGAR.
COFFEE ON ITS OWN COMING UP. BUSY NIGHT OUT THERE, HONEY?


NAH, NOT REALLY. BUSTED A BUNCH OF KIDS TRYING TO BREAK INTO A LIQUOR STORE A COUPLE OF HOURS BACK, BUT OTHERWISE IT'S BEEN REALLY QUIET. WHAT ABOUT YOU, UH, RAMONA?
FIRST ONE OF THESE I MADE SINCE I GOT *IN* HERE.
WASN'T THIS PLACE ALWAYS BUSY?
RAMONA
USED TO BE, BUT THERE'S NICER PLACES STAY OPEN ALL NIGHT NOW, AND THE OWNER'S TOO CHEAP TO EVEN SHELL OUT FOR AIR-CONDITIONING. HE'S TALKING ABOUT LOSING THIS SHIFT ALTOGETHER AT THE END OF THE MONTH.
I GUESS THAT MEANS YOU'LL GET YOUR *LIFE* BACK, HUH?
NAH, DAYSHIFT'S NO USE TO ME. I GOT A SPECIAL NEEDS KID BACK HOME AND THE NEIGHBORS LET HIM *SLEEP OVER* EVERY NIGHT.
I START WORKING DURING THE DAY HE'S GONNA NEED A CARETAKER OR SOMETHING AND I CAN'T AFFORD STUFF LIKE THAT.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
FIND SOME *OTHER* WAY TO MAKE MONEY AT NIGHT, I GUESS.
MAN, I WISH I COULD THINK OF SOME WAY TO HELP, BUT I'M ACTUALLY KINDA STRAPPED FOR CASH MYSELF RIGHT NOW.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH YOU? LISTEN, YOU KNOW YOU AND I HAVE A MUTUAL FRIEND?
WHO'S THAT?
ADRIAN TOOMES?
THE VULTURE?
RAMONA

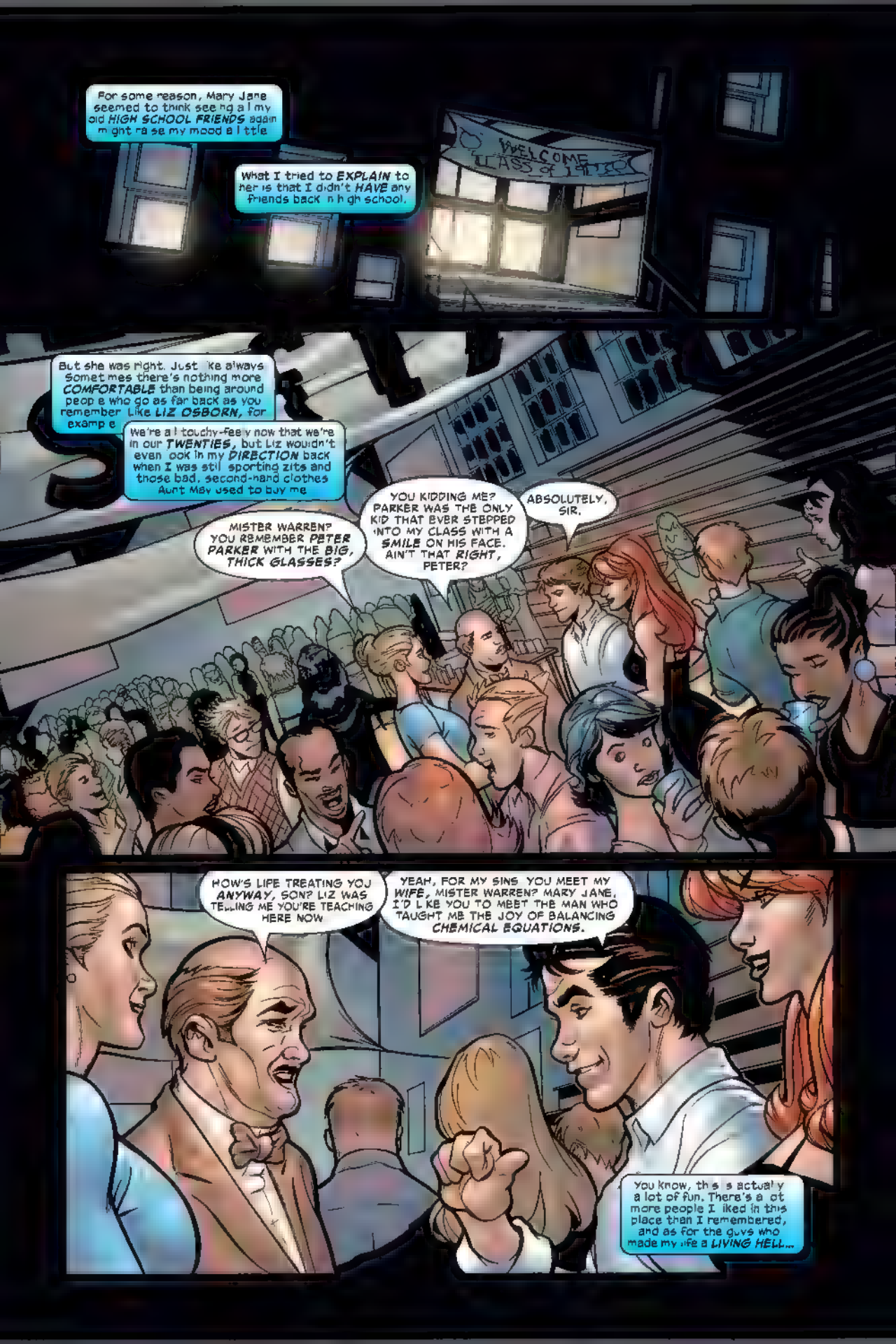
YEAH, WELL, I KNOW YOU TWO AIN'T EXACTLY DRINKING BUDDIES OR NUTHIN', BUT IT SEEMED LIKE THE KINDA COINCIDENCE WORTH MENTIONING.
I DATED HIS SON FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS. IN FACT, ADRIAN'S THE GRANDFATHER OF MY LITTLE BOY I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT.
Oh, man. Not the leukemia kid. Not that little kid whose operation The Vulture was stealing money to PAY for.
RAMONA
YOU SAY SOMETHING THERE, SPIDER-MAN?
NO. NOTHING. NOTHING AT ALL. IT'S JUST I COULDN'T IMAGINE THE VULTURE BEING ANYBODY'S GRANDFATHER, TO BE HONEST.
WELL, THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG. 'CAUSE ADRIAN WAS PRETTY MUCH THE BEST GRANDFATHER I EVER SAW. SAID HE'D EVEN PAY THE HALF-MILLION BUCKS TO GET MY BOY BETTER WITH SOME LITTLE NEST EGG HE'D PUT AWAY.
THAT SAID IT'S BEEN NEARLY A MONTH SINCE WE HEARD FROM HIM NOW. EVEN HIS CELL-PHONE'S SWITCHED OFF. WE DUNNO WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON, BUT HE'S SUCH A NICE GUY. WE KNOW HE WON'T LET US DOWN.
Oh, man. Like I wasn't feeling bad enough. Please, God, PLEASE let the ground open up and swallow me right now. Please get me out of here at the earliest opportunity.
WEEEOOOOWEEEOOOOWEEEOOOO

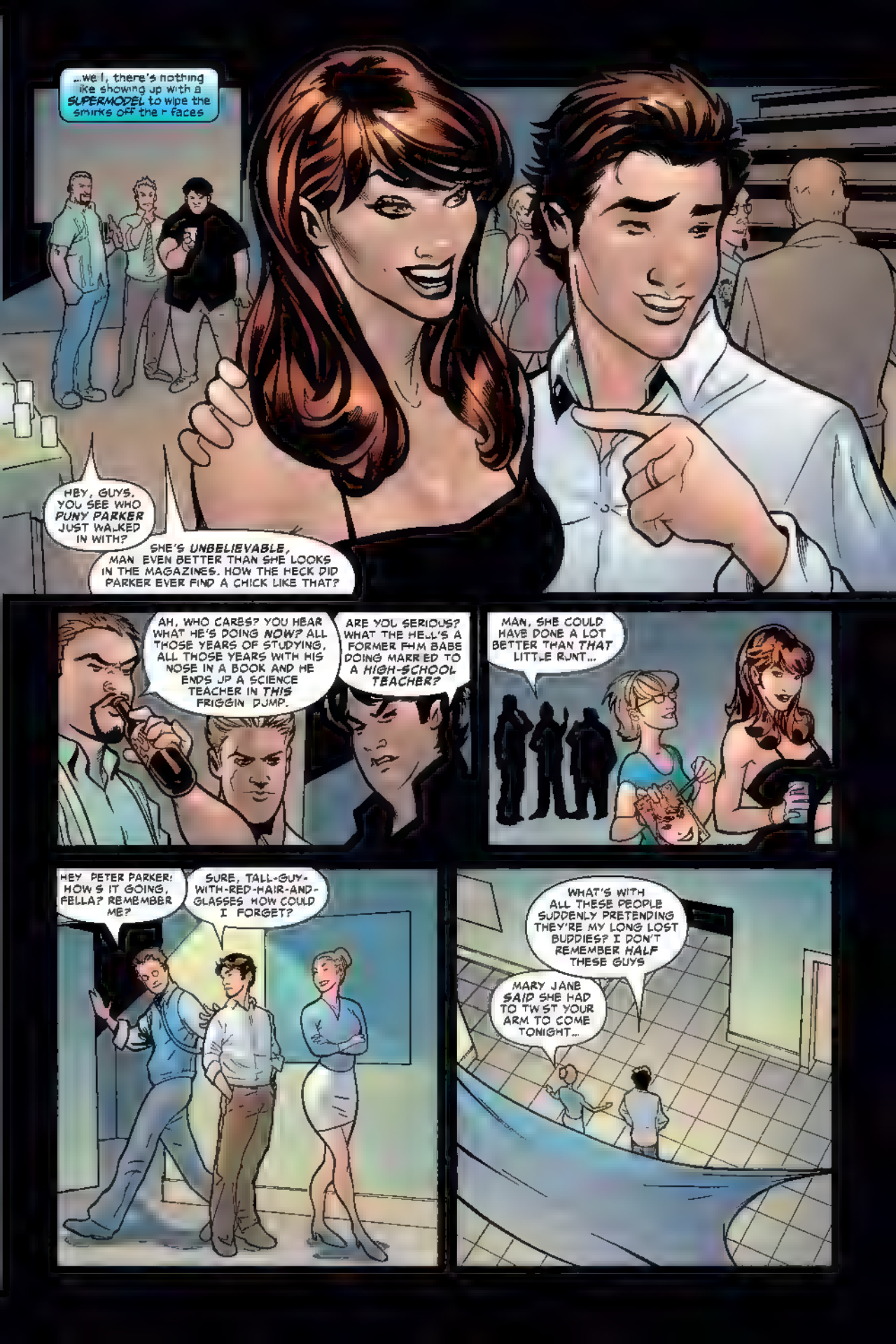
Bingo
SOUNDS LIKE MY CUE TO SPLIT. HOW MUCH DID YOU SAY THIS WAS AGAIN?
AH, FORGET ABOUT IT
WHAT?
ON THE HOUSE. I WAS JUST MESSING WITH YOU EARLIER. YOU THINK I'M GONNA CHARGE A REAL-LIFE SUPER HERO FOR A CUP O' COFFEE? GET OUTTA HERE. GO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, HUH?
Congratulations, Ramona. You just smacked me harder than a pumpkin bomb, a cybernetic tentacle and ten thousand volts of electricity all put together.
Turns out it was another hopeful in a Spider-Man costume posing for pictures on the side of the Chrysler building.
What is it with these people and this stupid COMPETITION? And who the Hell pooled up the five million dollars just to make my life even MORE of a misery?
Home by five. Showered, shaved and breakfast by six. Sitting here for an hour and a half running through everyone who knows the secret, whether they're good or bad, alive or dead.
Kaine, Thor, Kraven, Wolverine, Ezekiel. The Chameleon, poor old BEN REILLY...
YOU BEEN UP ALL NIGHT AGAIN?

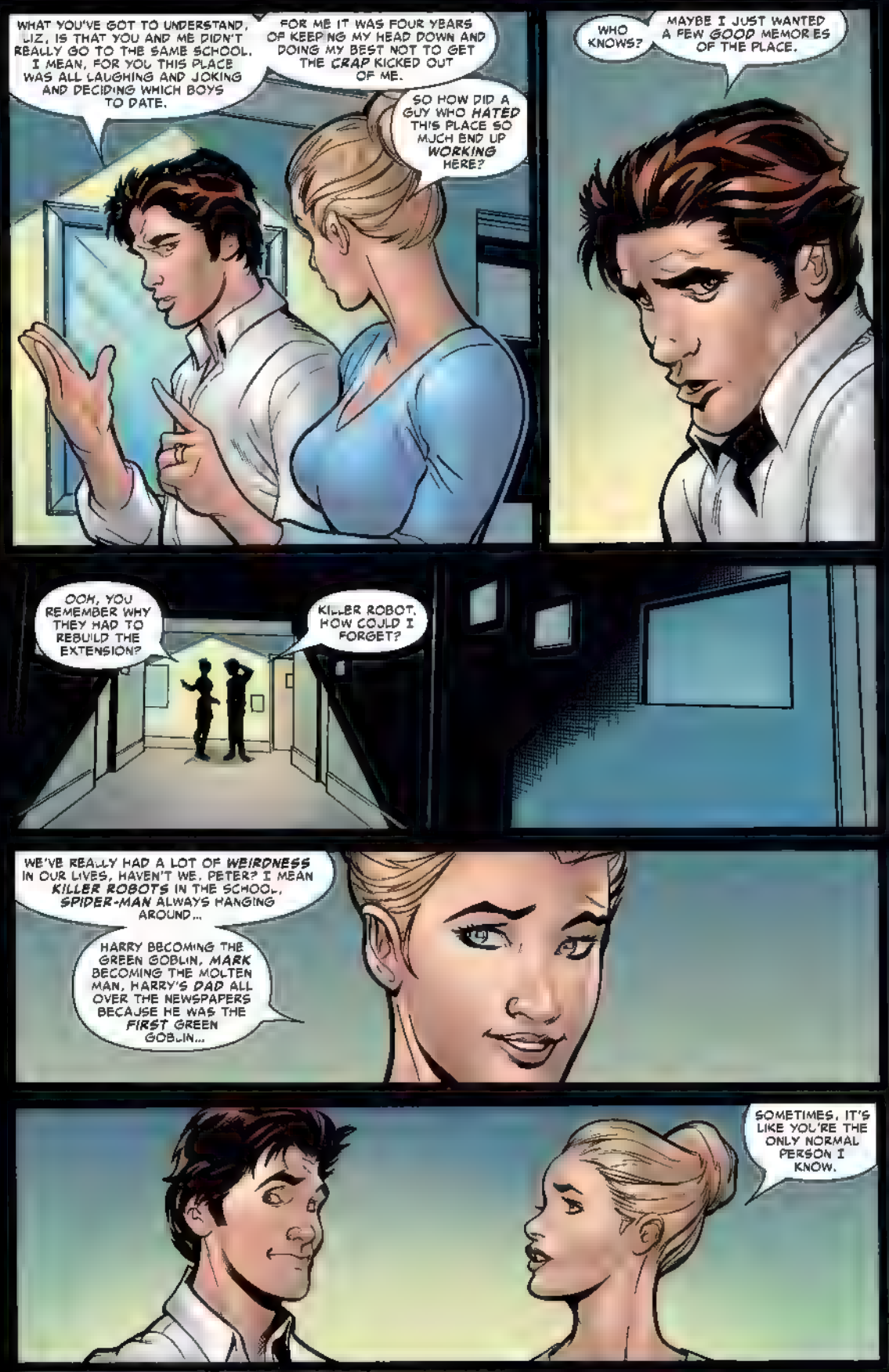

GRABBED FORTY-FIVE MINUTES ON THE COUCH A LITTLE EARLIER THAT'S ALL I REALLY NEED WHEN MY ADRENALINE S THIS HIGH. ANY LONGER'S REALLY JUST TO KEEP YOU COMPANY IN BED, TO BE HONEST.
PETER, YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM ALL TH S, HONEY.
I M FINE.
YOU'RE NOT FINE. YOU LOOK LIKE ONE OF THE LIVING DEAD.
WELL, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? GIVE UP? MARVEL GIRL SAID AUNT MAY DIED, FOR GOD'S SAKE.
SUPPOSE SHE WAS WRONG?
SUPPOSE SHE WAS RIGHT?
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, MARY JANE. I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING I CAN THINK OF. EVEN DOCTOR STRANGE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHERE SHE IS, AND I'M RUNNING OUT OF PEOPLE TO ASK.
TAKE A BREAK. JUST ONE N GHT. FORGET ABOJT VENOM AND THE B LLS AND ALL THE STUFF THAT'S DRIVING US CRAZY RIGHT NOW JET'S JUST CALL L Z AND TELL HER WE'LL GO TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REUNION.
PLEASE.
IF YOU WON'T DO IT FOR YOU, JUST DO IT FOR ME, PETER.

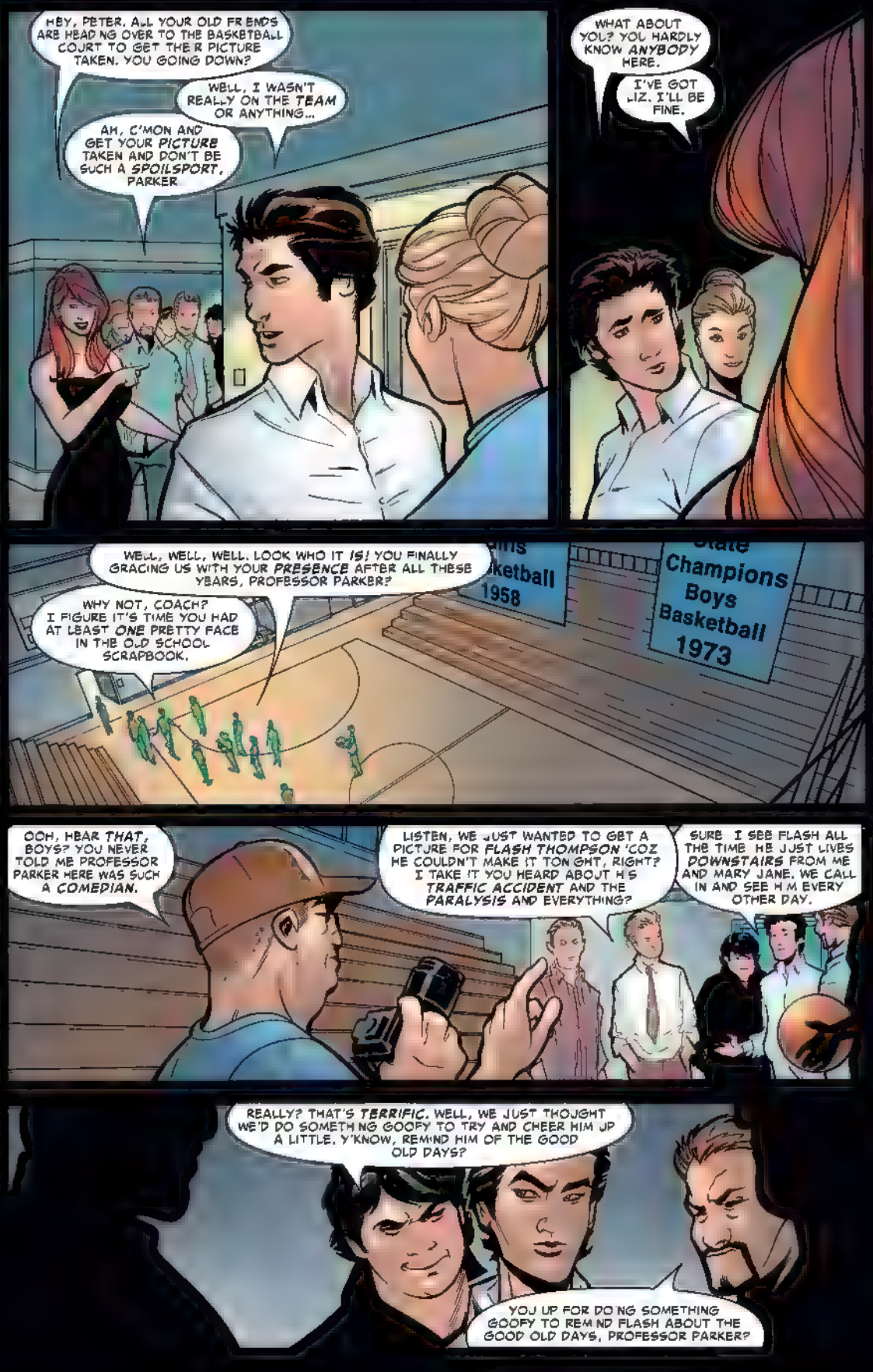
Our Lady Of The Saints Church.
SO HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR SICK BODY'S GONNA LAST WHEN YOU GIVE UP THE ALIEN SUIT, EDDIE?
WHO KNOWS? A COUPLE OF DAYS? A WEEK? IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, MISTER FORTUNATO. ALL I KNOW IS I BEEN SUCH A SCUMBAG THESE LAST FEW YEARS I DESERVE WHATEVER I GET.
THANKS FOR THE MONEY, BY THE WAY
NO PROBLEMO. I'M JUST SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG, BUT A HUNDRED MILL'S A HUNDRED MILL NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, RIGHT?
RELAX. I WASN'T GOING ANYWHERE.
I'M JUST LAUGHING AT THE IDEA OF ALL YOUR DIRTY MONEY BEING SPLIT AMONG FIFTY DIFFERENT CHARITIES YOU SHOULD BE FEELING PRETTY GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF, ALL THE FINE WORK THAT CASH IS GONNA DO.
I'M FEELING BETTER ABOUT THE MUSCLE VENOM'S GONNA BRING TO THE FAMILY BUSINESS AND THIS FOUR-EYED, LITTLE RUNT MY WIFE BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD.
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I'M FINALLY GONNA HAVE A SON THAT PEOPLE DON'T MISTAKE FOR A DAUGHTER. YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING?
JEEZ, DAD. DON'T HOLD BACK OR ANYTHING...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ANGELO? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT TAKING ON THIS BEAST I BEEN CARRYING AROUND?
HOW D'YOU THINK HE FEELS? THE KID'S EXCITED AS HELL.
I DIDN'T ASK YOU, I ASKED HIM. YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS, SON? BECAUSE IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND. YOU SURE YOU WANT TO THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY LIKE THIS?

MAN, I'M 5'9", A HUNDRED AND TEN POUNDS AND THE ONLY GIRLS THAT EVEN TALK TO ME ARE THE ONES MY DAD RENTS EVERY BIRTHDAY AND CHRISTMAS. EXACTLY *WHAT* AM I THROWING AWAY HERE?
BESIDES, YOU SEEN HOW MANY WEBSITES THIS THING HAS OUT THERE? YOU SEEN HOW MANY CHICKS ARE WRITING *FAN FICTION* ABOUT HIM?
BECOMING THE NEW *VENOM* PUTS ME IN THE MAGNETO OR DOCTOR DOOM CLASS AFTER EIGHTEEN YEARS OF GETTING THE *CRAP* KICKED OUT OF ME
UP TO *YOU*, K.D. I JUST HOPE YOU REMEMBERED SOMETHING HARD TO BITE DOWN ON BECAUSE THE FIRST TIME THIS THING CRAWLS INSIDE YOU HURTS LIKE NOTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE.
IT'S CLAUSTROPHOBIC FOR A WHILE, BUT HE SETTLES IN PRETTY FAST AND YOU'LL BOTH BE BREATHING IN SYNCH BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
IS IT TRUE IT KNOWS SPIDER-MAN'S *SECRET IDENTITY*?
OH, *YEAH*...
...AND IF YOU ASK IT NICE IT MIGHT EVEN *TELL* YOU.


For some reason, Mary Jane seemed to think seeing all my old HIGH SCHOOL FRIENDS again might raise my mood a little
What I tried to EXPLAIN to her is that I didn't HAVE any friends back in high school.
WELCOME CLASS of
But she was right. Just like always sometimes there's nothing more COMFORTABLE than being around people who go as far back as you remember. Like LIZ OSBORN, for example.
We're all touchy-feely now that we're in our TWENTIES, but Liz wouldn't even look in my DIRECTION back when I was still sporting zits and those bad, second-hand clothes Aunt May used to buy me.
MISTER WARREN? YOU REMEMBER PETER PARKER WITH THE BIG, THICK GLASSES?
YOU KIDDING ME? PARKER WAS THE ONLY KID THAT EVER STEPPED INTO MY CLASS WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, PETER?
ABSOLUTELY, SIR.
HOW'S LIFE TREATING YOU ANYWAY, SON? LIZ WAS TELLING ME YOU'RE TEACHING HERE NOW.
YEAH, FOR MY SINS. YOU MEET MY WIFE, MISTER WARREN? MARY JANE, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET THE MAN WHO TAUGHT ME THE JOY OF BALANCING CHEMICAL EQUATIONS.
You know, this is actually a lot of fun. There's a lot more people I liked in this place than I remembered, and as for the guys who made my life a LIVING HELL...


...well, there's nothing like showing up with a SUPERMODEL to wipe the smirks off their faces
HEY, GUYS, YOU SEE WHO PUNY PARKER JUST WALKED IN WITH?
SHE'S UNBELIEVABLE, MAN. EVEN BETTER THAN SHE LOOKS IN THE MAGAZINES. HOW THE HECK DID PARKER EVER FIND A CHICK LIKE THAT?
AH, WHO CARES? YOU HEAR WHAT HE'S DOING NOW? ALL THOSE YEARS OF STUDYING, ALL THOSE YEARS WITH HIS NOSE IN A BOOK AND HE ENDS UP A SCIENCE TEACHER IN THIS FRIGGIN' DUMP.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? WHAT THE HELL'S A FORMER FHM BABE DOING MARRIED TO A HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER?
MAN, SHE COULD HAVE DONE A LOT BETTER THAN THAT LITTLE RUNT...
HEY PETER PARKER! HOW'S IT GOING, FELLA? REMEMBER ME?
SURE, TALL-GUY-WITH-RED-HAIR-AND-GLASSES HOW COULD I FORGET?
WHAT'S WITH ALL THESE PEOPLE SUDDENLY PRETENDING THEY'RE MY LONG LOST BUDDIES? I DON'T REMEMBER HALF THESE GUYS
MARY JANE SAID SHE HAD TO TWIST YOUR ARM TO COME TONIGHT...


WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND, LIZ, IS THAT YOU AND ME DIDN'T REALLY GO TO THE SAME SCHOOL. I MEAN, FOR YOU THIS PLACE WAS ALL LAUGHING AND JOKING AND DECIDING WHICH BOYS TO DATE.
FOR ME IT WAS FOUR YEARS OF KEEPING MY HEAD DOWN AND DOING MY BEST NOT TO GET THE *CRAP* KICKED OUT OF ME.
SO HOW DID A GUY WHO *HATED* THIS PLACE SO MUCH END UP *WORKING* HERE?
WHO KNOWS?
MAYBE I JUST WANTED A FEW *GOOD* MEMORIES OF THE PLACE.
OOH, YOU REMEMBER WHY THEY HAD TO REBUILD THE EXTENSION?
KILLER ROBOT. HOW COULD I FORGET?
WE'VE REALLY HAD A LOT OF *WEIRDNESS* IN OUR LIVES, HAVEN'T WE, PETER? I MEAN *KILLER ROBOTS* IN THE SCHOOL, *SPIDER-MAN* ALWAYS HANGING AROUND...
HARRY BECOMING THE GREEN GOBLIN, *MARK* BECOMING THE MOLTEN MAN, HARRY'S *DAD* ALL OVER THE NEWSPAPERS BECAUSE HE WAS THE *FIRST* GREEN GOBLIN...
SOMETIMES, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY NORMAL PERSON I KNOW.


HEY, PETER. ALL YOUR OLD FRIENDS ARE HEADING OVER TO THE BASKETBALL COURT TO GET THEIR PICTURE TAKEN. YOU GOING DOWN?
WELL, I WASN'T REALLY ON THE TEAM OR ANYTHING...
AH, C'MON AND GET YOUR PICTURE TAKEN AND DON'T BE SUCH A SPOILSPORT, PARKER
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU HARDLY KNOW ANYBODY HERE.
I'VE GOT LIZ. I'LL BE FINE.
WELL, WELL, WELL. LOOK WHO IT IS! YOU FINALLY GRACING US WITH YOUR PRESENCE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, PROFESSOR PARKER?
WHY NOT, COACH? I FIGURE IT'S TIME YOU HAD AT LEAST ONE PRETTY FACE IN THE OLD SCHOOL SCRAPBOOK.
1958
Champions
Boys
Basketball
1973
OOH, HEAR THAT, BOYS? YOU NEVER TOLD ME PROFESSOR PARKER HERE WAS SUCH A COMEDIAN.
LISTEN, WE JUST WANTED TO GET A PICTURE FOR FLASH THOMPSON 'COZ HE COULDN'T MAKE IT TONIGHT, RIGHT? I TAKE IT YOU HEARD ABOUT HIS TRAFFIC ACCIDENT AND THE PARALYSIS AND EVERYTHING?
SURE I SEE FLASH ALL THE TIME HE JUST LIVES DOWNSTAIRS FROM ME AND MARY JANE. WE CALL IN AND SEE HIM EVERY OTHER DAY.
REALLY? THAT'S TERRIFIC. WELL, WE JUST THOUGHT WE'D DO SOMETHING GOOFY TO TRY AND CHEER HIM UP A LITTLE, Y'KNOW, REMIND HIM OF THE GOOD OLD DAYS?
YOU UP FOR DOING SOMETHING GOOFY TO REMIND FLASH ABOUT THE GOOD OLD DAYS, PROFESSOR PARKER?

OH, GOD. WHY AM I STARTING TO GET A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...?
WEDGIE!!
MAN, YOU'RE IN YOUR TWENTIES NOW. DON'T EMBARRASS YOURSELF.
SUPERSONIC WEDGIE!!!
SERIOUSLY, I'M NOT THE GUY I WAS BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL, YOU MORONS. FIRST PERSON LAYS A FINGER ON ME LEAVES THE GYM ON A FREAKIN' STRETCHER!

HUNNNNN!

AAAGGGH!
EDDIE! FOR GOD'S SAKE! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? THESE ARE INNOCENT PEOPLE YOU'VE INJURED!
OH, EDDIE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE, SPIDER-MAN. YOU'RE TALKING TO ANGELO FORTUNATO AND I'M HERE TO MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF...
PETER PARKER'S SPIDER-MAN?

TO BE CONCLUDED